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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-eighth session
Items 34, 35, 85 and 86 of the
preliminary list*
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
QUESTION OF PALESTINE
UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS
AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES
IN THE NEAR EAST
REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO
INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES
AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE
PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS
OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-eighth year

Letter dated 6 July 1993 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Last week a report issued by Middle East Watch, a human rights group based in the United States, attested that Israeli soldiers operating in undercover units in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip are in fact given "a license to kill" by their superiors in the army. It has been frequently reported by Palestinians and by human rights groups monitoring the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, that soldiers often gun down Palestinians even when their own lives are not threatened. The extensive findings of the group affirm that Israel is pursuing a policy of summary executions of Palestinians through such undercover operations.

This report and many other accounts reveal that Israeli soldiers have intentionally shot and killed many Palestinians who could have been taken alive. According to the Middle East Watch report, undercover squads have killed more than 120 Palestinians since the start of the intifadah (approximately half of those victims have been killed since January 1992). The shootings are usually undertaken by ambushing the victim without warning and with excessive force. As the report states, "in many cases the victims posed little or no grave danger to others, were given no opportunity to surrender and could in all possibility have

* A/48/50.

been captured alive". For example, of 20 deaths between March 1992 and February 1993, the study found that only six of the Palestinians were actually wanted fugitives. Furthermore, only two of the six were armed when killed. The others, it is stated, were suspected stone-throwers and masked youths who had been setting up roadblocks or scrawling anti-Israel graffiti, which were merely actions expressing their resistance to the occupation.

This policy and the relaxation of open fire regulations and restrictions have resulted in an intensified use of lethal force and of methods of repression against Palestinian civilians living under occupation. Consequently, an already appalling situation has declined to an even more dangerous and desperate level, and will only continue to worsen if it remains neglected.

On several previous occasions, on 1 April 1992, 24 April 1992 and 22 March 1993, we have called your attention to the abhorrent Israeli practice of using undercover army units to carry out summary executions of Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. We have also made mention of several other reports that have been published on this pattern of intentional killing. At this time, we reiterate our call for the Security Council to take the necessary measures to put an end to such criminal actions and to provide international protection for the Palestinian people, in accordance with Security Council resolution 681 (1990) of 20 December 1990 and as expressed by you in your report to the Security Council dated 25 January 1993.

I would be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as an official document of the General Assembly, under items 34, 35, 85 and 86 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nasser AL-KIDWA
Permanent Observer of Palestine
to the United Nations